

April 12, 1958

Dr. Robert H. Alway
Acting Dean, School of Medicine
Stanford University
Stanford, California

Dear Dr. Alway:

Your very gratifying letter dated April 7 just reached me. I promptly placed a call to your San Francisco Office; failing to reach you, I thought I could best reply by a letter.

I was most pleased, and relieved, to receive this expression of intent. There are a number of issues on which time presses, especially here in respect to investments in staff and construction, and others as well, so that it is rather important to come to some reasonably early conclusions. My wife and I would like to take advantage immediately of your invitation to revisit Stanford; unfortunately, it would take an unconscionable disregard of other immediate commitments to schedule such a visit at the instant. I have to be in Washington between May 8-10 and again May 14-17, and it seems to me it would be most reasonable if I made the round trip from Washington to Palo Alto in that interval. Owing to the difficulty of connections that is actually an easier itinerary than Madison-P.A. If necessary, I might postpone my return to Washington for another day. If this schedule is reasonably satisfactory, my wife (joining me in Chicago) and I would arrive at SFO early on Sunday May 11. My brother Seymour is on the Berkeley faculty and he can meet us and provide transportation, so that we might meet you at some reasonable hour on Sunday, if you wished, and we would have all day Monday and Tuesday. We have, of course, a number of friends and other professional acquaintances to talk to on the P.A. campus if a Sunday appointment there were inconvenient to you.

This plan supposes that we might make some preliminary headway by correspondence and telephone during the next four weeks. If a more urgent need displayed itself, I could try an earlier trip, but it would be at the expense of other important duties. It would be somewhat more convenient if we could make whatever telephone contact we do at my home, and I suggest this would be most congenial and economical as a station call to OEdar-3-2968 after about 6:15 PM CST most evenings during the next few weeks.

I certainly agree that the 'essential considerations' are best considered in person, but some advance progress might augment the value of the trip. Arthur had indicated as one space possibility our temporary occupancy of the quarters now used by Avram Goldstein. If this is what you had in mind, I should take an advance look at some plans of that, or whatever, building with some summary of the facilities (hoods, autoclaves, etc. that are intended to be left behind).

Another point that may warrant some preliminary inquiry is the proposed name of the department. "Medical Genetics" was purposely selected here a) in preference to "Human Genetics" and b) to limit confusion with the existing "Genetics" Department in the School of Agriculture. However, Medical Genetics has proved to carry such a strong connotation of Human Genetics to most people as to result in some real confusion as to the basic goals of our department here. I would therefore suggest that the unit be called the Department of Genetics (in the School of Medicine). I trust that this will occasion no concern in the Biology department or elsewhere: I believe with Arthur that the existence of a department with such a title has no more bearing on the status and missions of other geneticists on the campus than does a Biochemistry Department on other biochemical work. Arthur assures me that such hypothetical concerns are ~~less~~ pertinent to the Stanford climate than they might be here, and very much less than they are at Berkeley— which is, indeed, one of the real attractions of Stanford.

However, it would be imperceptive to disregard entirely the formal relationships that might or should pertain between the Genetics Department and the Biology and other geneticists, insofar as they might mar or help effective cooperation. I raise the question in hopes that any conceivable disquiet can be forestalled before it starts. I don't know what kind of formalities are part of the Stanford tradition, nor what the wishes of the people involved would be, and the latter should, of course, be the first consideration. Needless to say, I am likely to lean if anything too strongly for the role of the medical school as part of the university, along the lines of our evolution here at Madison.

Just one final point for our preliminary discussion. As you know, I have been in a state of suspension a propos Stanford et al. since December 1956. This has been a rather unhealthy basis for the continuity of my research and departmental duties. If we can come to an agreeable conclusion, I hope it will be in terms of moving with a minimum of further delay. If Kornberg's department can move by January 1959, it should not be very much longer after that that we might also, and this would be entirely satisfactory.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg
Chairman, Department of
Medical Genetics